



COVID-19 AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

This study tries to analyze the pandemic situation created by the COVID-19 that has changed the content and dynamics of work in almost all organizations, which is still an ongoing global health crisis. At the same time, its impact on the world economy, with short - and long-term difficulties for business, is growing exponentially. Significant tasks in almost all organizations have been suspended or postponed indefinitely. Managers have adapted to the role of a “virtual manager” and have come to terms with the fact that their colleagues work “elsewhere” and “independently.” COVID-19 reality has made it a priority for organizations to move work from office to home, take care of employee health and protect employees from the spread of the virus. E-mail, messengers, and video-conferencing platforms have replaced work and face-to-face communication with colleagues. Thus, in the context of the economic crisis and pandemic, modern management needs a study that takes into account the role and significance of specific emotions in managerial and socio-economic processes.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, emotions, management, distance learning

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1. Introduction

Management as a process and form of social relations is universal and involves several levels of analysis: social group, organization, territorial community (region, municipality, settlement), class, layer, national society, global society (Akhvlediani, M., Mushkudiani, Z., & Nikabadze, S. 2020)). Despite the fact that the objects of social management are most often considered the whole society and its separate areas (economic, political, social) (Ashforth B., Humphrey R. 1995), in the conditions created by the pandemic, it is necessary to focus on the subjects of management, since most management systems achieve success thanks to the subjects of management. They, in everyday relationships, make decisions, implement them, develop their knowledge, and change the emotional state with their subordinates¹. In this case, the emotional competence of the leader plays an important role. Emotional competence includes: the ability to accurately identify, evaluate, and express emotions; the ability to generate and express feelings; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and manage emotions (Ashkanasy N. M. 2003). It is clear that all of this helps to achieve emotional and intellectual growth, thought process, and manifests itself in such forms of behavior as agility, listening, empathy, courage, flexibility, and engagement (Fineman S. 2000 & Grant P. 2005).

2. Methodology

In this work, we try to find out and explain the basic concepts of impact of COVID-19 on management process and emotion itself. The purpose of the study was to examine the attitudes of employees towards emotion management and COVID-19 at work. Both qualitative and quantitative studies have been carried out in companies and educational organizations in Georgia. The anonymous questionnaire survey was used as the main method of quantitative study through a preprepared questionnaire; 247 respondents filled in the questionnaire.

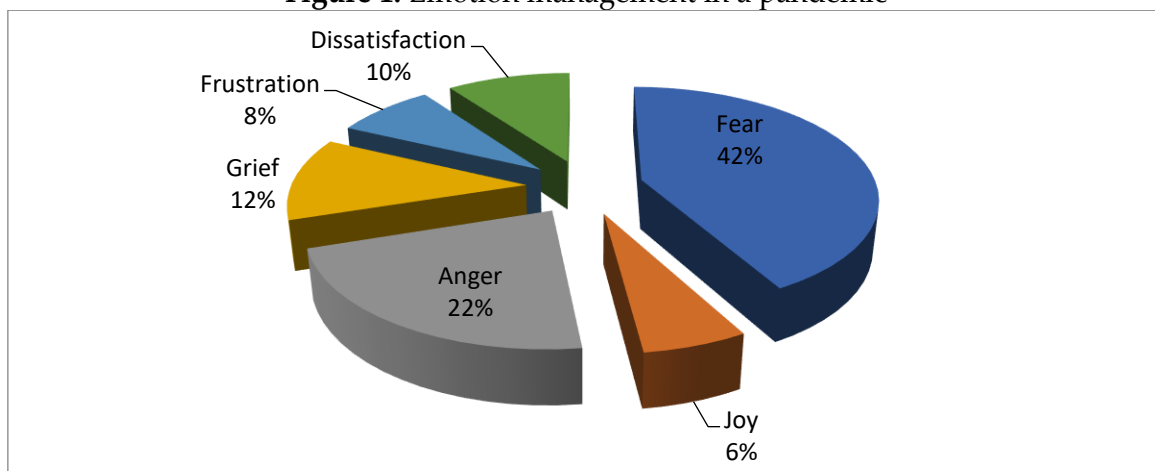
3. Research Results and Discussion

Recent studies in management psychology confirm that emotional competence is far more important than technical knowledge and skills in achieving successful results with people. It is also noteworthy that emotional competence is based on the emotional intelligence². Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is the ability of a person to control himself/herself and others, and it includes concepts such as: self-awareness, self-confidence, control over impulses, trust, self-motivation, optimism, communication skills, the ability to establish effective relationships with other people (Luksha P. O., 2009). It is clear that the developed emotional thinking of a leader means emotional thinking, which means that the leader can reason, analyze, understand, and manage his or her emotions (Hochschild A. R. 1983). This process can also be called the intellectualization of emotions, because when an emotionally competent leader is faced with an emotional problem, he/she interprets it into an intellectual task and solves it in

the same way as a task³. We believe that if a leader does not raise his/her emotional competence, the results of his/her performance can be catastrophic for both his/her career and personal life (Newcombe M. J., Ashkanasy N. M. 2002 & Payne R. L. & Cooper C. L. 2001).

In order to research and analyze the emotional components of the social behaviors of employees in remote and hybrid work environments nowadays, a marketing study was conducted at the Department of Business Administration of Akaki Tsereteli State University, using the survey method. A total of 247 respondents were surveyed. Respondents were selected based on statistical methods, both probability and non-probability sampling. The survey of respondents was conducted throughout the City of Kutaisi.

Figure 1. Emotion management in a pandemic

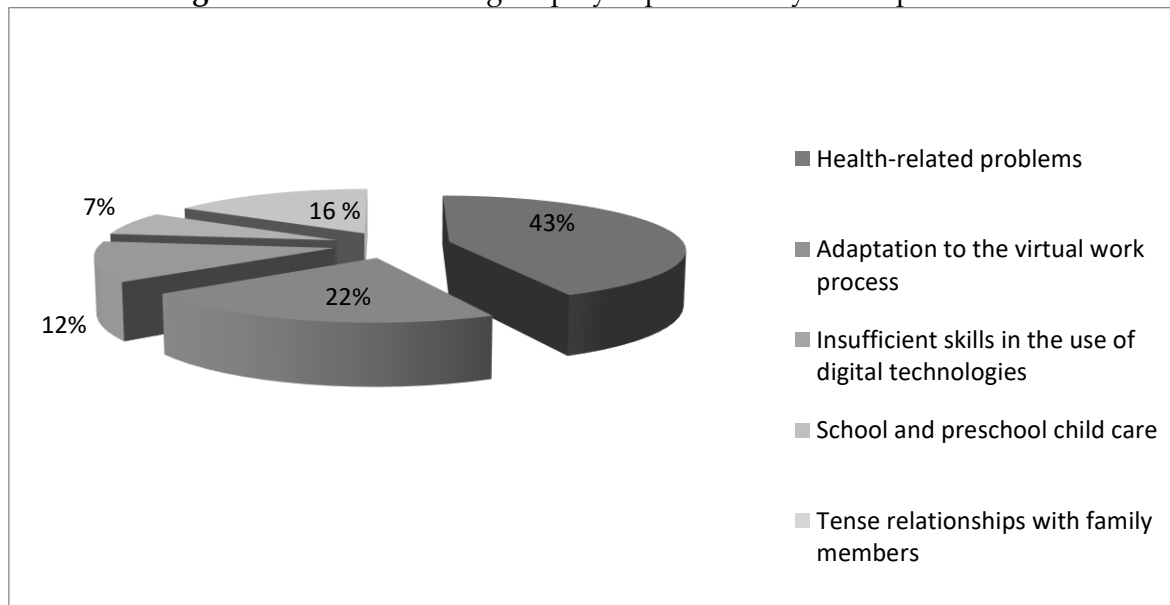


According to the survey, 62% of respondents were female and 38% male. By age group, 60% of the respondents are in the 25-35 age group, 25% of the respondents are in the 36-45 age group, and 15% of the respondents are in the 45-55 age group. 57% of the respondents are from the public sector, while 33% of the respondents are from the private sector. Surveys of both private and public sector employees show that some of the emotions experienced by employees in remote work in the pandemic are: fear (32%), joy (6%), anger (22%), grief (12%), frustration and dissatisfaction (18%), interest (10%) (See Chart №1). The majority of respondents named fear of life and health and an "unclear" future for job security as the cause of fear. The "anger" emotion is mainly caused by Covid regulations, which restrict their ability to move and maintain job security. The majority of respondents (87%) state that they need a specific medical service or procedures the most, but due to artificially created barriers, they are not able to enjoy the minimal services they definitely need and are overwhelmed by the feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction. Respondents name the joy as strong and necessary emotion; they say they feel it while working remotely, even after getting minimal results. However, private sector employees (33%) note that most of all the negative emotions prevail in the work process, yet they express positive emotions because they believe that it is their professional obligation. The majority of employees in both the private and public sectors

(87%) state that workplace is a place where they regularly have to not only control of emotions, but also experience special and excessive self-control. Which is why they feel exhausted at the end of the day.

To find out what factors affect the productivity of employees in the private and public sectors when personal life and activities take place in one space, the following results have been obtained: health-related problems (58%), adaptation to the virtual work process (56%), insufficient skills in the use of digital technologies (37%), school and preschool child care (10%), tense relationships with family members (27%).

Figure 2: Factors affecting employee productivity in the pandemic



The answers given by the respondents to the question "please, name the factors contributing to emotional well-being in remote working conditions" were distributed as follows: prevention of health risks (32%), in which respondents consider reduced bureaucracy to getting involved in needs-tailored medical services. effective communication with managers to alleviate remote workload and increase performance efficiency (11%), adapting the evaluation and feedback process to new realities and tailoring them to the virtual work process (18%), providing staff with material resources (8%), encouraging each other's activities (12%), and deepening cooperative relations (19%).

Within the study, the emotional competence of managers employed in the public or private sectors were also assessed according to the following characteristics of behavior: empathy (45%), courage (14%), flexibility (22%), agility (17%), listening (16%), and engagement (12%). The results of the study and the expectations towards the role of the manager in the pandemic conditions and before the pandemic are totally different. Previously, managers were selected, and employees promoted to this role, mostly based on management and employee appraisal skills. However, the notion that "*coaching is a key function of management*" (Goletiani, K., Mushkudiani, Z., Gulua, E., & Janelidze, N. 2021).

becomes questionable in the pandemic. Our study confirms that it is important to monitor the work process, but it is much more important to find out how employees feel.

We asked about the impact of distance learning on the emotions of administration, teachers, and parents of public schools, to which 75 percent of the principals surveyed said that online management required a transition to a new leadership style, 15 percent said that the hybrid education system is safe, and one shouldn't give in to emotions at all, and 10% believe that this is a serious threat that will facilitate the alienation of employees. Teachers were surveyed. They noted that creating and managing online classes was difficult initially due to malfunctioning platforms and lack of access to their use. The overwhelming majority believe that the use of only developmental assessment has caused many uncertainties, in terms of not to reduce the motivation of students. Some note that systematic changes, unclear instructions, low student activity, and parental observation of the lesson process caused severe stress, fatigue, and feelings of insecurity. The parents whose children are students with special needs, for whom the problem of computer addiction is further aggravated by the distance learning form, experience the same feelings and fears.

4. Conclusion

The results have shown that, empathy, which is not unfamiliar to the business world and is not news for the modern management, should be a top priority. An empathic manager must be able to contextualize work performance and behavior, go beyond a simple understanding of the results or work processes, and present himself/herself as a team member. Empathy requires a high level of trust, care, and a culture of acceptance on the part of managers. It is not easy to create a management and culture focused on empathy, but we believe it is worth the accompanied challenges.

We believe the crisis has never been the best time to take on new approaches, but the pandemic leaves many companies with no choice but to leverage the technologies available to them more effectively to help employees develop skills meeting the requirements of the digital age.

Thus, we found out that in the challenging environment created by the pandemic, almost every company is trying to figure out how the approaches to both the short and long term planning process will change. Employee support, encouragement, provision of material and technical means, strengthening of cooperation relations, encouragement of each other's activities in the workplace, professional supervision and professional training and courses, professional development workshops, we think will help to assess future events and find the right way out of the probable situation

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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